

THE MIDLAND

A MAGAZINE OF THE MIDDLE WEST

VOL. XI

MARCH 15, 1925

NO. 6

POEMS OF A CITY PARK

By HELEN HOYT

CALENDAR

I took the park for calendar,
Waiting for spring;
And once I traced sure sign of her —
Listened for birds to sing.
But then came a day of snow,
And then a raw, windy day,
With sharpness that made me know
Spring was still far away.
And I had thought she would not come,
But tonight as I walked home,
Down the bare gray ways of the park,
I found, by a hedge, all sitting without fear —
Hands clasped — two lovers in the dark.
And now I know that spring is really here!

SUNDAY IN THE PARK

I

Discourteously you have used this courtesy of green!
Because Beauty unbends to you, draws near to you,
Opens her hands in bounty to bring your pleasure,
You grow familiar, insolent, and transgress her kindness.
Is this your homage and thanks, your offering to Beauty?
This slovenliness of paper-cluttered paths,
These strewings over lawn and bench of broken food?
You have smirched her grace and seemliness and peace,
And smirched your own hearts with irreverence!

II

How shall we be gay
Who have only one day
To learn the way?
One day in all the seven
To taste what is given
Of our brief heaven.

Even in these green grounds
Come the factory sounds,
The Elevated pulses and pounds.
Our laughter is loud, so we may not hear;
We will caress and crowd, for friendliness is dear;
We will eat long, for food is an old cheer.

Our pleasure is not your kind;
Our mind is not *your mind*.
We have eaten joy's rind
And left the core —
What time have we to explore
Your subtle lore?

If when the day is done
We have enough of the sun,
Enough of fun
And touch of the earth
And gaudy mirth
For those six days of dearth —
Something on Monday to *tell* —
Then well: for this is *our* way
Of being gay;
And this is Our Day!

III

My coat's purple lining spreads out around me,
Over the bright grass; and here I sit,
Royal in the midst, on folds and satin,
Feasting with a lettuce-leaf and a plum!
White eggs, yellow centers, white bread, red plum —
There are yellow plums — yellow —
And I sit on a purple island in the midst of green!

IV

The old love of the sea that sent forth the Vikings once
Is here confined to a pool, a flat-bottomed boat,
And a time-keeper charging for adventure by the quarter-
hour.

But they spend gladly, only to feel the oars,
That old feel of water moving under a bow.
Their voyage runs aground in shallows,
But they leave the land by forgetting it,
Oblivious of us who lie under parasols on the bank.
They have no flags but their laughter and shouts,
And no strange country to discover —
Only this island the landscape gardeners built,
With life-preservers hung on white posts by the shore.
Their latitude and longitude are the rustic bridge
And the boat-house where cargoless they return:
They have satisfied for a little the ancestor in their bones!

V

No, not to the Zoo; it tires — like a whole continent to
visit!

Set off in states, fenced into territories —

Here the tigers dwell, there the jaguars scream their
possession;

All hostile or sullen or vain in the glare of the sun.

The swans sailing in a circular pool are a futile people.

What do they care for beauty, these beautiful?

Their necks but arch that way for catching bread-crumbs.

And of monkey-climbings and clatter, and sadness in
monkey-eyes,

I have enough in the city all the day long. . . .

The aviary is another city crowded with many-ness of
life,

With life's loud confusion of intent.

Only the white love-birds know peace, sitting side by side,
Whispering together of love.

Perhaps tonight I shall go and watch the deer,

Walking delicately about in their wood, in their quiet
place;

Stepping with silent steps, soft-furred, reticent,

Or lying down with bent knees;

One by the other, delicately lying down, in the dusk,

Under the branches;

Motionless, with carved horns, dim;

Beautiful as though you had come upon them in a dream.

VI

Are you still fair

When I am not there?

All through the night

In your half-light,

What do you do, park?

There is no peace of dark

For your repose,

Your eyes to close;
Is the city's noise a fret,
Or have you a way to forget
And dream quiet dreams
Of country silence and streams,
Here where the city is piled?
Or remember when you were wild,
A forest, and knew the tread
Of Indian feet, long dead,
And nights so still by the still lake
You heard your own leaves shake.

THE GARDEN STEPS

A layer of light, a layer of shade —
That is how the steps are made,
Slanting gradually and wide
Up and down the terrace side;
With lilacs tall on either hand,
Stalwart servitors who stand
Meeting their branches over your head
Like a canopy outspread.
Fairy carpet you may walk,
Patterned with pattern of leaf and stalk;
And stepping, stepping, as you go down,
You can almost feel your gown
Touch the shadows, and brush them out.
When the wind is about,
When the branches are stirred and blown,
The patterns move on the gray stone;
Fading and deepening where they lie —
Vanishing as you walk by.

LAMP POSTS

What kind of trees
Are these
With slender straight trunks of gray?
No branches or leaves have they,
Growing along the edges of the walk;
Only a single stalk
Bearing a magic flower with heart of flame.
What is your name,
Mysterious soft bloom?
I see your rich clusters in the gloom,
And over the flower beds
Your brightly-petaled heads,
And by the dark curve of the lagoon,
Moon after moon —
Gem after gem
Hanging from your invisible stem!

APRIL SHADOWS

Shadows, shadows, shadows,
Netted all across the grass!
How would it feel to step on them?
Would they trip me as I pass?

Gentle-spreading, cloud-gray patterns,
Pale and delicately laid;
Lovely trees with twigs and branches
All of shadow made.

I will dance among these branches!
In and out the sunny spaces!
Where the shadow trees are lying,
Where they bend in hollow places,

I will dance an April dance,
In between the branches gray;
In-and-out the soft young shadows
I will skip and play.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Helen Hoyt comes of New England stock and Puritan tradition. The formative years of her girlhood were spent in a small Connecticut town. A complete change came when she entered Barnard College, where she found herself absorbed in the study of philosophy, biology, and courses offered by James Harvey Robinson and Charles Beard. She wrote her first poem when she was a sophomore in college. The eight years after her graduation were spent chiefly in Chicago and Appleton, Wis. For a year she was associated with Miss Monroe on the staff of *Poetry*, and was also on the staff of *Others*. In 1919 she went to California for a visit and remained to marry W. W. Lyman, then instructor in English and Celtic in the University of California. Her volume *Apples Here in My Basket: Love Poems* was published by Harcourt, Brace & Co. last year. She is now living in the Napa Valley of California, "chiefly engaged," she says, "in running after a lusty male child."

BRIEF REVIEWS

Viennese Medley, by EDITH O'SHAUGHNESSY. (Huebsch, \$2.) This book has appealed to me strongly. I have no way of measuring the accuracy of its picture of post-war Vienna. But I can testify to the human truth of its characterization, and to the soundness of its craftsmanship. In their several relations to the very vivid and truly tragic figure of their aunt, "Frau Ildefonse Stacher, born von Berg," are presented the diverse members of a family: Irma and her boys; the happy Liesel and Otto; the unhappy Anna and Pauli; Hermann, the war-broken physician, and Mizzi, his wife, the successful profiteering shopkeeper; Eberhardt, the former professor, and his starving family augmented by the helpless child of a friend; Corinne, most appealing and perhaps most tragic of all; Fanny, the shame and the support of her brothers and sisters. The structure thus given to the book is adequate to the strain of its diverging interests. And through the revelation of the spiritual impact of "Tante Ilde" upon each of her nieces and nephews, the book is lifted above its historical significance, great as that may be, and made a satisfying and moving work of art.

J. T. F.

The Best Short Stories of 1924, and the Yearbook of the American Short Story, edited by EDWARD J. O'BRIEN. (Small, Maynard, \$2.50.) The appearance of Mr. O'Brien's annual is always one of the important literary events of the year. It repays study, and nobody interested in the contemporary short story can afford to ignore it. Its editor's liking for exotic foreign settings is more evident in this tenth volume than in some of its predecessors, and his liking for the mystical is less evident. My own preferences pull the other way in both instances, but I am delighted with some of the stories in this book. Three of them I must mention: Mr. Greenwald's "Corputt," Miss Suckow's "Four Generations," and Miss Gale's "The Biography of Blade," taken respectively from *THE MIDLAND*, *The American Mercury*, and *The Century*. Of course, I heartily approve the stories by Mr. Van den Bark and Mr. Van Dine; I think I should single them out even if they had not been originally printed in *THE MIDLAND*. Mr. Sergel's story from *Phantasmus* is an interesting and competent study. I should say that Mr. Gouvernor Morris' tractate was the poorest thing in the volume. — Finally, the compilations of the *Yearbook* are valuable.

F. L. M.

